



## White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Fact Sheet: AAPI Women and Girls

*"We know our economy is stronger when our wives, mothers, and daughters can live their lives free from discrimination in the workplace, and free from the fear of domestic violence."*

-President Obama, February 12, 2013

President Obama believes that America remains a place where everyone who is willing to work hard has the chance to get ahead, no matter where you come from or what your gender is. Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women have made tremendous contributions to our nation, but still face challenges. That's why President Obama has fought for AAPI women by increasing access to and participation in Federal programs, supporting women-and minority-owned businesses, and building new ladders of opportunity into the middle class. From re-establishing the [White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders](#) (Initiative) and creating the [White House Council on Women and Girls](#) to appointing two women to the Supreme Court and a highly qualified team of women and AAPI leaders throughout his Administration, President Obama has taken concrete steps to improve the quality of life and opportunities for AAPI women.

When President Obama re-established the Initiative on October 14, 2009, he affirmed his commitment to addressing the issues and concerns of AAPI women. Since then, the Initiative has engaged AAPIs across the country through over **200 events** including national summits, roundtables, open dialogue sessions, and workshops in **25 states**, the District of Columbia and Pacific Islands, and in **50 cities**, reaching about **30,000 people**. The Initiative also convened over a dozen roundtables to hear exclusively from **AAPI women** about the issues and challenges they face.

This fact sheet highlights some of the Obama Administration's accomplishments on behalf of AAPI women and girls.

- **Supporting AAPI Women in the Workplace:** The Obama Administration has supported AAPI women workers by:
  - **Creating the First Interagency Working Group to Address Salon Worker Health and Safety:** A myriad of health and safety issues affect AAPI salon workers, 40 percent of whom make up the national nail salon workforce. The Initiative and the Environmental Protection Agency, in partnership with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the Small Business Administration, and national and community groups, developed a plan to assess and improve regulations, programs, and outreach strategies to ensure salon worker health and safety. In addition, OSHA awarded almost \$400,000 in grants to build long-term health and safety capacity and to provide training and [educational materials](#) on hazards and means of prevention in the nail care industry.
  - **Ensuring Fair Labor Standards for In-Home Care Workers:** The Department of Labor proposed a [rule](#) to provide minimum wage and overtime protections for workers who provide in-home care services for the elderly and infirm. This rule will make a tremendous difference for the nearly two million workers in this industry – roughly 90% of whom are women, and a large proportion of whom are women of color and immigrant – by helping to ensure they earn fair wages for a hard day's work.

- **Fighting Pay Discrimination:** The first piece of legislation President Obama signed into law was the [Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act](#), which restored basic protections against pay discrimination. The President continues to advocate for the passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act, which is common sense legislation that gives women the tools they need to fight pay discrimination. And President Obama has convened an Equal Pay Task Force to ensure that existing equal pay laws are fully enforced. Through this Task Force, key agencies in the Federal government are coordinating and enhancing their efforts to protect women from pay discrimination.
- **Expanding Language Appropriate Access to Information on Employment Laws:** The Department of Labor's Women's Bureau translated into Chinese and Vietnamese the Bureau's publication, "A Guide to Women's Equal Pay Rights," and "An Employer's Guide to Equal Pay". The guide on women's equal pay rights is designed to help working women understand their rights under certain laws that govern equal pay and compensation. The guide for employers is designed to help them understand the primary federal laws that govern equal pay and compensation, provide tips to monitor pay practices, and identify resources to help ensure compliance with those laws.
- **Expanding Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education and Career Opportunities:** Launched in November 2009, the President's [Educate to Innovate](#) campaign features among its three core pillars a commitment to "expanding STEM education and career opportunities for underrepresented groups, including women and minorities." The President has also gone to great lengths to highlight the accomplishments of girls in STEM subjects. In early fall, 2011, he invited the winners of the first-annual Google Science Fair, all talented young women, to the Oval Office to share information on their award-winning projects and showcase their achievements. Federal agencies, like the National Science Foundation and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, have also [taken steps to improve workplace flexibility](#) for America's scientists and engineers, removing barriers for women who look to advance their careers at the nexus of their childbearing years, an all too often conflict.
- **Improving Health Outcomes and Expanding Access to Quality, Affordable Health Care for AAPI Women:** President Obama signed the [Affordable Care Act](#) into law, which expands access to health care for [AAPI women](#), improves data collection to better track and research AAPI health issues, and promotes prevention and wellness in the [AAPI community](#).
  - **Improving Health Data Collection Methods for AAPIs:** The Affordable Care Act provides an unprecedented opportunity to improve data collection on AAPI communities. The law invests in increased data collection and research about health disparities, as well as initiatives to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of health care professionals in order to strengthen cultural competency training among health care providers. As a result of the law, the Department of Health and Human Services established [data standards](#) for race and ethnicity that include additional granularity for the Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander categories. These data standards will be used in the agency's national population health surveys, and will help to better understand the health concerns facing the AAPI and AAPI women's community.
  - **Preventing Insurance Companies from Denying Coverage or Raising Premiums Based on Gender or Pre-Existing Conditions, Including Pregnancy:** As part of the Affordable Care Act, in 2014, it will be illegal for insurance companies to discriminate against anyone with a pre-existing condition. Before the law, insurance companies could deny coverage to women due to pre-existing conditions, such as having cancer or being pregnant. In addition, in 2014, many insurers will not be able to charge women higher premiums than they charge men.

- **Promoting Prevention and Wellness in the AAPI Community:** Cancer is the leading cause of death for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Although breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among AAPI women, they are the least likely group to have ever had a mammogram. Similarly, cervical cancer rates are among the highest in the United States for Laotian American, Samoan American, Vietnamese American, and Cambodian American women. Yet AAPI women are less likely to get routine Pap tests than women in other groups. The Affordable Care Act will help to reduce these disparities by ensuring that people who join new health insurance plans can receive recommended [preventive services](#) including a range of cancer screenings, with no additional out-of-pocket costs.
- **Making AAPI Women's Preventive Health Care Affordable, Including Contraception:** For the first time, the Institute of Medicine has set forth guidelines for women's preventive health care, including mammograms, HIV testing and counseling, domestic violence counseling, contraceptive coverage and testing for gestational diabetes. As part of the Affordable Care Act, new insurance plans must cover these services with no deductibles, copayments, or coinsurance.
- **Building a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Immigration System:** The Obama Administration has taken key steps to building a new 21st century immigration system that meets our Nation's economic and security needs while honoring our legacy as a nation of immigrants.
  - **Reforming the Broken Immigration System So Everyone Plays by the Same Rules:** President Obama's [commonsense immigration reform proposal](#) supports the AAPI community by building a fair and effective system that lives up to our heritage as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. The proposal continues to strengthen our borders, cracks down on employers who hire undocumented workers, includes an earned path to citizenship that will bring undocumented immigrants out of the shadows, and streamlines our family-sponsored and employment-based immigration systems. In addition, the President's proposal allows eligible undocumented students who have been raised and educated in the U.S. to obtain permanent residence.
  - **Supporting Family Unity During Waiver Process:** In January 2013, the Department of Homeland Security issued a [final rule](#) that under certain circumstances reduces the time U.S. citizens are separated from their immediate relatives (spouses, children, and parents) who are in the process of obtaining visas to become lawful permanent residents of the United States. Eligible individuals are now able to apply for a provisional unlawful presence waiver before they depart the United States to attend immigrant visa interviews in their countries of origin. For more information, visit: [www.uscis.gov/provisionalwaiver](http://www.uscis.gov/provisionalwaiver).
  - **Implementing "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals":** In August 2012, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) began accepting requests for consideration of deferred action for individuals who were brought to this country as children by their parents through no fault of their own. Deferred action is a discretionary determination to defer removal of an individual if certain eligibility requirements are met. Individuals whose cases are deferred will not be removed from the United States for a two-year period, subject to renewal, and may also receive employment authorization. As of [March 2013](#), USCIS has received over 469,000 requests and approved approximately 245,000.
- **Taking New Steps to End Modern Slavery:** On September 25, 2012, President Obama [announced unprecedented government action](#) to combat one of the greatest human rights abuses of our time – human trafficking – which affects more than 20 million people around the world, many of them women and children. AAPIs represent one of the [largest trafficked groups](#) in the U.S. In response to this challenge, the President signed [Executive Order 13627](#) to strengthen the U.S. Government's zero-tolerance policy on trafficking in government contracting, and launched

[several new initiatives](#) to identify and assist survivors, increase resources, plan for future action, and grow public-private partnerships. As part of this effort the Administration is also streamlining current procedures for the existing T-visa process, which allows victims to remain in the United States and aid the prosecution of their traffickers.

- **Protecting AAPI Women from Violence:** It is estimated that between 41 and 61 percent of AAPI women experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner. The Obama Administration has worked to expand resources for victims of violence by:
  - **Reauthorizing and Strengthening the Violence Against Women Act:** In March 2013, the President signed into law the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization Act, reauthorizing this historic piece of legislation that provides funding for various programs designed to reduce domestic violence, provide increased protections for immigrant victims, improve treatment for victims of rape, and extend protections to members of the LGBT community. The law also reauthorizes the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, providing critical support for both international and domestic victims of trafficking and helping ensure traffickers are brought to justice. VAWA includes provisions that allow victims to separate their immigration status from their abusers and report crimes regardless of their immigration status.
  - **Extending Work Authorization for Battered Immigrant Spouses:** In December 2012, USCIS released a [policy memorandum](#) establishing eligibility for employment authorization for approved VAWA self-petitioners and battered spouses of certain nonimmigrants. Under this new policy, approved VAWA self-petitioners will be provided an Employment Authorization Document, and battered spouses of certain nonimmigrants will be able to work in the U.S. for the remainder of that individual's period of authorized stay.
  - **Combating Sexual Assault on College Campuses:** In April 2011, Vice President Biden and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan introduced comprehensive guidance to help schools, colleges, and universities better understand their obligations under Federal civil rights laws to prevent and respond to the problem of campus sexual assault. The VAWA Reauthorization also requires colleges and universities to provide information to students about domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking and inform students and staff about the number of these crimes that occur on and near campus.
- **Expanding Opportunities for AAPI Women-Owned Businesses:** The success of the 1.5 million AAPI-owned businesses in the United States, which employ more than 2.8 million workers, is critical to our economy. President Obama has worked to expand opportunities for AAPI and women-owned businesses through increased access to credit and Federal contracting opportunities.
  - **Expanding Access to Credit for AAPI-Owned Businesses:** Small Business Administration loans are three to five times more likely to be made to minority- and women-owned businesses than conventional small business loans made by banks. Between January 2009 and March 2013, over \$19 billion went to AAPI small businesses through 27,485 SBA loans, including more than \$2.7 billion which was made available through 5,268 SBA loans to AAPI women-owned businesses. Although SBA support to AAPI small businesses fell to just under \$3 billion in FY2009 due to the credit crisis, this number has since increased by nearly 80% to about \$5.3 billion for both FY11 and FY12, and is on track for FY13 as well.
  - **Ensuring AAPI Women-Owned Businesses Compete for Government Contracts:** The Obama Administration implemented the [Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract](#) program, which helps level the playing field for women-owned small businesses in over 300 industries where women are

underrepresented by giving them greater access to Federal contracting opportunities. Between 2009 and 2012, women-owned small businesses were awarded nearly \$50 billion in federal prime contracts.

- **Enforcing the Civil Rights of the Nearly One-Quarter of American Workers Who Are Employed by Federal Contractors and Subcontractors:** The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) at the Department of Labor enforces both the affirmative action and non-discrimination obligations of federal contractors in order to improve employment opportunities for women, minorities, people with disabilities and protected veterans in the federal contracting workforce. In FY 2012, OFCCP successfully negotiated over \$535,000 in financial remedies for 662 workers of Asian descent who were adversely impacted by employment discrimination.

Click [here](#) for more information about the Obama Administration's record for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Click [here](#) for more information about the Obama Administration's record on women and girls.